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Mamata call for medical camps

SUDESHNA BANERJEE

Please work in Jungle Mahal. That was chief minister Mamata Banerjee's request when Rotary International president Kalyan Banerjee called on her on Thursday.

"The chief minister asked us to hold medical camps in tribal areas," said Banerjee, the third Indian to head the humanitarian organisation. She will identify five areas in Jungle Mahal for Rotary to hold three- to seven-day camps.

Another project that has got the chief minister's approval is distance education for rural children. "Even if schools have buildings, they do not have teachers. Distance education with the help of computers can overcome that problem," said Banerjee.

"She also asked us to upgrade school infrastructure, especially set up girls' toilets in villages including Jungle Mahal. Otherwise girls drop out as they grow older," said Rotary district governor Angsuman Bandyopadhyay, who accompanied Banerjee along with the organisation's director, Shekhar Mehta, and past district governor, Ravi Sehgal.

Rotary also plans to sponsor 2,00,000 fruit-bearing trees and build low-cost shelters if land is made available.

Rotary International will sponsor 100 heart surgeries for children from poor families in Bengal. "The chief minister's secretariat has referred a few hole-in-the-heart cases to us. We have also offered free limb replacements," said Bandyopadhyay.

This is Banerjee's first visit to the city after taking charge of Rotary.

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Rotary aid for Maoist belt

HT Correspondent

■ letters@hindustantimes.com

KOLKATA: Rotary International, a 106-year-old humanitarian service organisation, will work towards health and educational development in Jangalmahal.

Kalyan Banerjee, the new president of Rotary International, soon after assuming office on July 1, met chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday to discuss developmental in the Maoist-affected areas of the state. "Mamata Banerjee has told me about the lack of proper medical facilities in Jangalmahal area and in tribal areas. So, we have decided to

conduct extensive medical camps in the remotest areas of Jangalmahal. The camps will not be a matter of the day, we want real development in this area in terms of health so these camps may go on for more than a week," said Kalyan Banerjee.

Rotary shall not just restrict its services to development of health and medical facilities. They are keen on bringing a change in the education and infrastructure sector as well. Kalyan Banerjee also announced that they would soon start a distance education programme in government schools of the remote villages in the state. They shall provide

computers in these schools and also train teachers so that they could impart technical education to students in these backward areas.

"The chief minister told us that there are no toilets for girls in village schools and that is why the girls when they grow up feel shy to go the school and give up on education eventually. So we shall be working on this as well and try making as many girls toilets in schools as possible. We have already made many in a few villages across Bengal," said Angsuman Bandyopadhyay, district governor, Rotary International.

In an attempt to beautify the state and bring in more

greenery, Rotary has promised to give the villages in Bengal 2 lakh fruit-bearing trees so that villagers can use them to earn revenue.

Providing a low-cost shelter, eradicating polio, arranging safe drinking water, free heart, limb and eye operation for kids, carrying on scholarship programmes are a few other issues on the agenda of the new Rotary president.

"We have a \$2 million project in the pipeline that will be ready to launch by the end of the year. The initiative would be to start a social networking site like the existing ones to attract youngsters," Kalyan Banerjee said.

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Rotary promises medical camps for rural Bengal

Our Correspondent

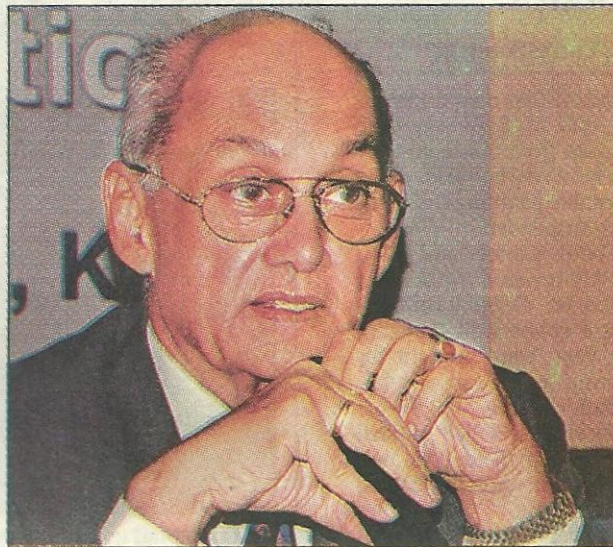
Kolkata: Rotary International members, after meeting chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday, promised to give computers to schools, hold free medical camps and set up low-cost shelters in Bengal's rural areas.

"We have asked the state government to send us recommendations of people who need eye, heart or limb operations. We have promised that we will perform free operations on patients who are recommended by the government," said Shekhar Gupta, the Rotary International director.

The chief minister had suggested to them medical camps in tribal areas, especially in Jangalmahal, and they promised to try and bring up as many camps as possible in the area. She had also requested the organisation to perform free eye, heart and limb operations on children.

Banerjee has also asked the Rotarians to work on distance education since the infrastructure in the schools in rural areas was not up to the mark.

A Rotarian said their organization had been working in Pune on such a project and would use the same model in Bengal, wherein students would be provided computers and teachers would be trained



■ Rotary International president Kalyan Banerjee at a press conference in Kolkata on Friday —Prabir Bhattacharaya

in computer application.

The issue of low-cost shelters for the poor was also discussed. Rotary promised to help the government set them up. "We will build the shelters on land proved by the government or by a trust. We will not build on private land," said Rotary district governor Angshuman Banerjee.

The meeting with the chief minister was led by Kalyan Banerjee, the new president of the Rotary International. "My focus is eradicating polio from the country. If we can continue putting efforts into

eradication of this disease and have no cases in two years, India can be declared polio-free," said Banerjee.

The chief minister also urged him to invest in agro-chemical industries since he too was a chemical engineer at United Phosphorus. "She asked me to bring agro-chemical industries to the state. It will take some time, but I will work on this."

Rotary International has three Indian representatives in the 17-member board—Kalyan Banerjee, Shekhar Mehta and Yashpal Das.